



# Kinship Link

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## Pro Kinship for Kids

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Pro Kinship for Kids  
Lower level Our Saviors  
Lutheran Church  
1400 S. State Street  
P.O. Box 666  
New Ulm, MN 56073  
Phone 359-2445 or  
1-800-642-5779  
Website:  
[www.prokinship.org](http://www.prokinship.org)

Newsletter by  
Kari Beran, Director



## Winning Ways to Talk with Children

Talking with children involves the exchange of words, ideas, and feelings between two people. Communication is what we say and how we say it. We

communicate with looks (scowls and smiles), with actions (slaps and hugs), with silence (warm or cold), as well as with words (kind and unkind).

Adults usually do not have any difficulty communicating with children when it simply involves giving directions or explaining the danger of cars, but they do have difficulty communicating when feelings are involved - either the child's or their own. Good communication leads to warm relationships, cooperation, feelings of worth. Poor communication leads to kids who "turn off" adults, conflicts and bickering, feelings of worthlessness.

Here are some winning ways of talking with children. But remember, what works well for one person may not work for another. If these

suggestions are not successful try other ways of communicating based on your own experience and understanding of your child.

### Communicate

**Acceptance** - When the child knows that you accept him or her just as they are, it is possible for them to grow, to change, and to feel good about himself or herself. He or she is likely to get along well with others. The child who feels accepted will be more likely to share his or her feelings and problems. When adults preach at a child, a child feels you don't like me. When adults lecture at a child, a child feels I don't do anything right. Communicate your acceptance of the child no matter what.

### Use Door Openers -

Door openers are invitations to say more, to share ideas, and feelings. They tell the child that you are really listening and interested in them. It says their ideas are important, and that you accept him or her, and respect what they are saying.

Examples are "I see", "Tell me more", "Really?", and "That's interesting".

### Listen Attentively -

Get rid of distractions and pay attention to what the child is saying. At times adults may need to stop whatever they are doing and listen to the child. Do not pretend that you are listening when you aren't. If you are busy - talking on the phone or doing something - tell the child, "I'm busy now, but let's talk about that later". Then be sure to follow through.

### Use "You-Messages" to Reflect the Child's Ideas and Feelings -

"You-messages" describe the child's feelings and encourage them to express their troublesome feelings. When children are allowed to express bad feelings freely, they seem to disappear like magic. Hiding bad feelings is self-destructive. They do not disappear at all; they lead to self-hate, headaches, ulcers, and violent actions.

## Winning Way to Talk with Children continued

**Use More Do's than Don'ts** - Using "Do's" rather than "Don'ts" is very difficult, especially if adults already have the "don't" habit. It is very difficult to break bad habits. Using "Do's" rather than "Don'ts" requires much thought and practice. In other words, tell them what to do, not what not to do. However, the improvement in your relationship with your child when you go to all this work will make it worth the effort. Talk to children as you talk to your friends. If adults would talk to children with as much consideration as they talk to their friends, they could really communicate with children and be on the way to excellent relationships.

**Talk With (Not At) Children** - Talking "at" the child is a one-sided conversation. Talking "with" a child is two-way conversation. Talking to him or her and then listening to what they say is a key. Forming the habit of talking "with" children rather than "at" them will be especially helpful when they become teenagers. You must learn to respect your children.

**Use "I-Messages" to Communicate Your Thoughts and Feelings** - "I-Messages" tell the child how his behavior makes the adult feel. Often children don't know how their behavior affects others. "I-Messages" give the child responsibility for changing their own behavior.

**Get the Child's Attention Before Speaking to Him or Her** - Children can concentrate on only one thing at a time. Call the

child's name and allow him or her time to turn their attention to you before speaking to them. They will not hear you until they focus on you.

**Make Important Requests Firmly** - Speak as if you mean it when you need a child to do something at a specific time or in a specific way, and give the child a reason why he or she must do this thing at this particular time or in that particular way.

**Communicate at Eye-Level** - Eye-contact improves communication, so get down to eye-level when talking to children or anyone you are talking to.

**Say "Please", "Thank You", and "You're Welcome" to Children** - Children deserve the common courtesies which adults use with each other. Children learn by imitating the speech and behavior of adults. Let them learn to say "Please" and "Thank You" by imitating you doing it.



**Try Not to Interrupt and Scold Children When They Are Telling You Their Stories** - Let the child tell the story before you jump in with comments.

**Don't Use Unkind Words Which Tear the Child Down** - Unkind words, spoken without even thinking of their results make the child feel that he or she is disliked. They discourage the child, and give them a poor concept of themselves. More important, unkind words do not help. They only make matters worse.

**Use Kind Word to Encourage and Build Up the Child** - Kind words bring happy results! They give the child more self-confidence and help him or her to behave better, to try harder, and to achieve more. They communicate love and respect, and create an atmosphere in which problems can be discussed openly and understandings reached.

**Make Requests Simple** - Children have a hard time remembering several orders at a time, so keep it simple as one request at a time.

The importance of good communication is: good communication helps children to develop confidence, feelings of self-worth, and good relationships with others. It makes life with them more pleasant now and helps them grow into adults who have good feelings about themselves and others. So, take the time to use winning ways to talk with your children and with really anyone you interact with in your life.

